



## Top marks for business mentors in schools initiative

BUSINESS leaders from top Irish companies are teaching schoolchildren life skills for the future under a volunteer mentor programme.

Almost 2,000 employees from 128 firms have given their time and experience to almost 1,284 students in 193 schools since 2001.

The scheme is run as part of the **Schools' Business Partnership**, an education inclusion programme that partners businesses with DEIS secondary schools in disadvantaged communities.

Allianz Worldwide Care's Claire Cusack and 23 colleagues said the scheme had positively impacted on the lives of fifth and sixth-year pupils in St Dominic's Girls Secondary School in Ballyfermot who they had mentored.

"From greeting a receptionist, being processed as a visitor in a corporate setting, to meeting managers and sitting in meeting rooms,

they are equipping the students with real life skills," she said.

Businessman Maurice Pratt, chair of **Schools' Business Partnership**, valued the scheme at about €1.5m a year – including €500,000 in funding and €1m worth of time given by professionals giving one-to-one support and workshops to teens.

KPMG, Diageo, Kraft Foods and Communicop are among the multinationals involved, providing positive role models and driving school completion rates.

"The benefits from the partnership of business and education result in rewards for all partners – mentors within the business community, second-level students, their parents and communities," said Children's Minister Charlie Flanagan who presented certificates to more than 200 students and mentors in Dublin.

**Sarah Stack**



Children's Minister Charles Flanagan with Jamie Ivers, Gillian Marley and Conor Doherty JASON CLARKE